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ABSTRACT

The problem of social exclusion in Poland was examined along with possible strategies for combating social exclusion through vocational education and training (VET). The examination began with an analysis of the special needs of individuals who have reduced opportunities within the labor market and/or are members of national and ethnic minorities. General policies promoting social integration were explored along with measures directed at special groups, general strategies for improving access to education, and the role of nongovernmental organizations in preventing social exclusion. Possible methods for approaching members of the following risk groups were analyzed: the long-term unemployed; school leavers; rural young people; early dropouts; and disabled persons. It was concluded that efforts to combat social exclusion in Poland through VET should begin by targeting young people in agricultural areas and long-term unemployed individuals and that programs should include the following elements: (1) knowledge, professions, skills, and qualifications; (2) general development to improve people's chances for a job, decent living, and good level of education; (3) offers of work and employers who are ready to offer jobs to unemployed individuals; and (4) local entrepreneurship. (The bibliography lists 17 references. A discussion of changes in enrollment and graduation rates in Polish schools and universities between 1991-1992 and 1998-1999 is appended.) (MN)

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ED 473 185

Vocational education and training against social exclusion

Report

Poland

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1. The concept of social exclusion

In ordinary, everyday language exclusion refers to people who consider themselves, or are considered by others to be excluded from a whole range of services, activities and resources - such as work, development, education, healthcare, housing, decision-making, social participation etc. Such a definition, however, can hardly be used for diagnostic purposes.

The concept of social exclusion is actually not a new one in Poland; however it has developed since the early 70s and since the 80s it has been viewed within the context of social disintegration - the rupture of relationship between individuals and society.

A more detailed investigation of the concept may be found in a variety of mostly sociological literature. According to Fred Mahler, for example, the characteristics of social exclusions include:

- limitation of access to decision making;
- having a narrower scope of entitlements;
- having less choice and more pressure;
- poorer prospects for life;
- poorer economic situation;
- less access to education.

The term "social exclusion" has also been used by international bodies. For example the European Commission defines social exclusion as the inability of citizens to secure their social rights, with negative effects on their social standing and participation within society.

According to Recommendation 1196 of the Council of Europe a root cause of social exclusion is deep, persistent and widespread poverty. That is why we have included in our considerations the problem of poverty, in line with the situation in the labour market and access to education.

We can approach the problem of social exclusion in two ways. We can analyse it as a problem of individuals and as a problem of the whole society or even societies. We may talk of social exclusion in the context of society, when deep segmentation occurs or when the organisation of society produces different patterns of incentives for certain groups of citizens, when the rules of organisation constrain access to goods and services, and forms of activities to some groups of citizens.

Social exclusion in the context of an individual refers to a person who suffers from certain disabilities and therefore feels or is considered to be disadvantaged and, because he or she bears certain negative features and is deprived of social contacts.

We should also differentiate between short-term marginalisation (short-circuit) and the situation where a person is permanently isolated from participation, which may lead to social disaffiliation.

Thus we may state that the socially excluded are not all those that find themselves at the bottom of the social ladder, but those whose chances to rise are close to zero or else those who are descending and have no chance of halting this downward process.

For the purposes of this Report we assumed that the socially excluded may be groups characterised by a limited access to the labour market, wealth and to the education which offers good prospects in future life. Thus limited access to work, affluence and education are hereby understood as causes of social exclusion.

When we started to analyse the problem of social exclusion in Poland for this project we made the assumption that we face a set of phenomena which form the syndrome of social disadvantage.

We defined as the aim of our report to analyse the extent to which individuals and social groups gain access to goods and services, such as work, education and wealth. We assumed that the analysis would point to groups deprived of this access and thus socially excluded. We decided to start our investigations by discussing the factors bearing on social exclusion.

In the period of transformation individuals and families have become poor because of unemployment (no income), lack of qualifications or poor qualifications (low wages). The situation is especially difficult for:

- those living in regions with a weak labour market (little or even no chance to get a job);
- families where there are many children (low mobility, low income per capita);
- young people (few offers of work for school graduates, no income, dependence);
- women (considered by employers as risky employees because of wage and labour market discrimination, though forbidden by law);
- farmers (the small size of farms does not allow for a decent income, there is an overpopulation of rural areas, yet as landowners or co-owners some of the unemployed are deprived of the rights enjoyed by the unemployed).

All these factors are among the causes of poverty, unsatisfied needs and, together with unemployment, social isolation. Poverty means limiting the access to education and to the labour market. Thus in Poland there is the danger that in the near future the dangerous phenomenon of inheriting a disadvantaged social position from generation to generation may occur: social exclusion, in other words, may become a permanent element of social life.

2. Sources of information

The team based research on a broad spectre of documents and data, both from official publications and the results of detailed investigations by other researchers. In the case of access to the labour market we relied on three main sources of information:

- Reports on registered unemployment by the National Labour Office;
- Central Statistical Office (GUS) labour force surveys, sociological type of research, based on ILO standards;
- Reports of independent researchers from Warsaw University and other research institutes.

In the case of analysing access to education our main source of information was the report by a group of experts from the Institute of Labour and Social Policy from the OECD as well as reports by other researchers. We also used the data from the Central Statistical Office.

Our analysis of poverty was based on reports from the Institute of Labour and Social Policy, research done by other scientists, also data from the Central Statistical Office.

We also made use of recent research carried out by researchers from the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, the Polish Academy of Sciences and the Institute of Sociology, Warsaw University.

We are aware that not all data are available. The best system of collecting data exists in the case of the labour market. Both labour market services and the statistical office have a developed system of information. The situation is worse in the case of education. The main obstacle is the reform of education which, at a varying pace, has been ongoing for ten years; a totally new system was introduced in September 1999.

Problems of access to reliable data on poverty have another source - first of all they are connected with the very problem of understanding the term "poverty" and the problems of measuring the phenomenon. Yet, in our opinion, the materials and data we used for this report provide a good picture of the topic.

3. General assumptions

The report is concentrated on two main goals. The first is to find which social groups are socially excluded or threatened by social exclusion. The second is to discuss what measures have been undertaken to prevent social exclusion and what programmes in the sphere of education and vocational training can be offered to persons and groups already excluded or threatened by social exclusion to prevent this phenomenon.

To meet the first end the authors discuss the main factors that cause social exclusion in Poland. The problem of access to the labour market, wealth and education is examined.

The situation in the labour market and groups in a disadvantaged situation are first of all presented. Then we discuss the problem of poverty and its correlation with unemployment, regional differences and the general condition of state budget. Finally we point to barriers - internal and external - to accessing education, which, on a different level, affect various social groups.

The chapter discussing disadvantaged groups is based on the assumption that we cannot yet identify groups which are already excluded according to the three main causes: limited access to labour market, to wealth and to education. There are groups which face problems

entering and/or staying within the labour market, that are more affected by poverty but that do (at least formally) have access to education. However, in order not to rely on the formal definition of access to education, we decided to define the concept of "access to education" as that which allows for progress up the educational ladder, for entering and advancing in the labour market and for a decent income over time.

CHAPTER II: CONTEXT

1. The process of transformation in Poland - basic information

The process of transforming Poland that started at the beginning of the 1990s had a strong impact on various aspects of social life, especially the labour market. The most important changes in Poland were:

a) Transfers between sectors of the national economy. Employment in industry fell from 36% in 1988 to 29% in 1998. In services it grew from 35% to 44%, though it was mainly due to the rise of employment in private shopkeeping and less in more refined services. Employment in agriculture however remained stable dropping from 28% in 1988 to 27% in 1998, though it was even smaller (26%) in 1993. There was also a fall in employment in the state-owned sector from 54.9% in 1990 to 29.3% in 1998. According to the census carried out in 1988 employment in this sector had been over 80%.

b) There was a downturn in the economic activity of the population. At its peak in 1981, 17 million out of a active age population of 22.2 million were in employment. Between 1980 and 1989 500,000 people left the agricultural sector and 300,000 the employment market outside agriculture. The activity coefficient fell from 58.4% in 1995 to 57.1% in 1998 and is still on a downward trend, despite the inflow of young people of productive age who were born in the 1970s.

c) There was a fall by one-third in employment within the public sector from 9.6 million in 1989 to 6 million in 1995. On the other hand there was an increase of employment in the private sector from 4.24 million in 1989 to 5.62 million in 1995. This suggests that only one-third of those that lost their job in the public sector found alternative employment within the private sector.

d) There have been changes in education. [1] Less young people ended their studies upon the completion of primary education -. There was also a shift from basic vocational education to full secondary: altogether 62% of basic school graduates now continue education at full secondary level. The reform of education introduced in 1999 will bring new phenomena, which are difficult to judge yet.

e) There is a growing difference between regions. The analysis of the structure of 49 voivodships (now 16) shows that eight of them accounted for over 50% of GNP, mostly large agglomerations; differences between voivodships with the biggest and the smallest GNP per capita is 250%. Regional differences have always been very strong in Poland. A long period of partition [2] affected economic development, the level of education and legislative systems. Industry was better developed in Western Poland - coal mining, generally heavy industry which is a problem in itself nowadays - than in the East. When Poland regained independence in 1918 there were many efforts to improve the situation, yet the differences persist to this day. The fact is that, at the beginning, regions suffering

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[1] See Annex

[2] For over 120 years Poland was partitioned by Austria, Prussia and Russia, which caused differences in the level of social and economic development.

from greater unemployment were mostly industrial "monocultures" i.e. heavy industry in Silesia and textiles in Central Poland, Lodz and the nearby regions. Later on the problems moved more to the north of the country where collective farming dominated - after the collapse of these farms people were left without much help. Poland has quite a big farming population (still 27 - 28%); thus we may talk of the hidden unemployment of rural people with the situation generally more difficult in regions dominated by agriculture, both collective and private, characterised by a small area of farms. The level of incomes was also different - higher in West and Central Poland, much lower in the East and South.

f) Since the beginning of the period of transformation, Poland has been facing a serious unemployment problem, initially due to the recession that hit the country, then to the result of structural changes in the economy. The unemployment rate grew steadily up to the middle of 1994, then stabilised at 16% before dropping to 10.4% in 1998 and increasing again to 13.6–13.7% in the first half of 2000. The situation within the labour market has forced changes within the educational system. Though formally educated - the majority have at least basic vocational education - the unemployed, including school graduates, have problems in adjusting to the demands of the labour market in Poland. It is not so much a question of access to education *per se* as access to good education enabling progress both to higher education levels and on the labour market.

g) Poverty exists in all countries, though it differs as to the scope and the level. Polish poverty before transformation affected mostly older people, especially in villages, before agricultural insurance old-age pensions were introduced however multi-children families and families affected by problems such as alcoholism were also affected. We may say that overall poverty in contemporary Poland is mostly the result of two factors: the decrease of real incomes and the increase in unemployment. The topic will be discussed later.

h) The segmentation of Polish society is becoming deeper. Since 1996 there has been an increase in Poland's gross national product, consumption levels have also risen. At the same time 18 million people (46.7% of the population) have lived below the poverty line whereas in 1989 the equivalent figure was only 14.8%. In 1996 about 8% of households consumed one-quarter of incomes and owned one-third of property whereas 1.5 million households received 1/25th of incomes and 1/20th of property. Who suffered most? According to researchers [3] they were employees from collapsing state farms, workers from collapsing enterprises, individual farmers; it is said that only one-quarter of farms managed to adjust to market conditions. Another group that was hit were employees in the public sector: teachers, nurses, some medical doctors, and also social workers.

i) There were also changes in other spheres. Polish society initiated the process of transformation into a civic society, simultaneously adjusting to free market rules while promoting the idea that individuals should take more responsibility for themselves and their families. For some the change was problematic. The level of social security dropped. People began to feel (and still feel) increasingly insecure. According to research [4] unemployment is perceived as the strongest threat to their well being. People today also feel threatened by poverty, uncertainty and their conditions of health. On the other hand employment has become a more treasured value.

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[3] Spoleczenstwo polskie w latach 1989 - 1995/96, Warszawa 1997

[4] See Spoleczne skutki bezrobocia w wymiarze lokalnym, Warszawa 1992, Polityka spoleczna w swiadomosci spolecznej, Warszawa 1995, Rozne oblicza bezrobocia, Warszawa 1999,

j) There was a drop in the number of houses built. While in 1989 over 150,000 new flats were built, in 1996 the number was less than 60,000. The result is that Polish society has 282 flats per 1,000 people; in Western Europe the equivalent figure is, on average, over 400 per 1,000.

k) The worsening of the population's health during the period of transformation can be observed. The tendency was the strongest in the years 1989 - 1991. The situation subsequently improved, which was clearly demonstrated by a rise in life expectancy and a fall in infant mortality rates. Health reform introduced since 1999 seems to have undermined this positive trend.

l) There was also a worrying increase in social problems, especially crime which increased from 1,450 crimes per 1,000 population in 1989 to 2,324 per 1,000 in 1996. [5] The problem of alcoholism is very acute in Poland. It is said that four to five million people drink too much, 1.5 million are alcoholics. The number of drug addicts is rising, also the number of suicides. Their causes have changed; in recent years the main causes attributed to these social ills are the loss of employment, the inability to maintain family and the sense of increasing uncertainty.

m) The role of the State has declined in importance. The first step was administrative reform in 1990, which introduced a self-government administrative unit, gmina, responsible for local matters, including basic education and social assistance. The next step was made in 1999 with the introduction of powiat, a mid-level self-government unit, responsible for such matters as education, health, labour market, vocational and social integration of people with disabilities, and family help, including crisis situations. Due to the lack of adequate finance, the financial burden for undertaking these responsibilities is too heavy for local authorities. The reforms, though in principle judged positively, have proved expensive and have affected the general condition of state and society. Other reforms, in social insurance - introducing a three tier system, in education and more local responsibility in health services - narrowed the scope of state responsibility.

2. Causes of social exclusion

As stated before, there are three main causes of social exclusion: limited access to work, wealth and education. Thus we decided to present a more detailed information on the situation on the labour market, on poverty and the situation in the sphere of education.

The situation within the labour market

The population's level of economic activity is low in Poland. In recent years only 56%-57% of the population aged 15-60/65 (roughly 65-66% of the total population) are economically active. A maximum activity coefficient is attained by the group aged 25-44 years of age (in the region of 75%-79%; for the group 15 to 24 years it is below 30%. The situation on the labour market in Poland is characterised by a high level of unemployment. In the first half of 2000 year it went again up from 13.5% to 13.7%.

The following features of Polish unemployment are the most striking:

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[5] Polskie spoleczenstwo w latach., op.cit.

There are large differences between the regions. At the end of 1998 the difference between the highest and the lowest regional unemployment rates was 17.9 percentage points (20.5% in Slupskie and 2.6% in Warszawskie voivodships). In a new administrative division the difference shrank (from 9.0% in Mazowieckie to 21.4% in Warminsko-Mazurskie). The whole region of north Poland, except for Gdansk, has two striking features: a persistent low GNP per capita and a high level of unemployment. These are regions with a large share of collective farms before the transformation; the collapse of collective farms left people with no income and no prospect for employment. Traditionally unemployment is lower in central and west-central Poland that has a higher national income.

Unemployment is different between groups:

- One-quarter to one-third of the age group aged under 24 is affected by unemployment; in the first half of 2000 young people still made up 30% of the total number of unemployed people.

- most of the unemployed are women; in November 1999 women comprised almost 58% of all unemployed, in the first half of 2000 their share went down to 56.1%; the number of unemployed women is growing faster (by 6.1% during the previous quarter as compared with 3.6% for men); women are also more affected by long-term unemployment - 46.2% had been seeking work for more than 12 months, whereas for men the figure was 26.4%; women made up almost 70% of all long-term unemployed;

- Polish unemployment is characterised by a low level of qualifications. In November 1999 37.8% of all unemployed people had basic vocational education. Over 40% of this group has been unemployed since the beginning of the transformation period. 32.7% had basic general education (the equivalent figure for this in previous years was less than 24% proof perhaps of the effectiveness of vocational training brought in as an element of labour market policy and the general rise in the level of education). People with a university education made up 2.0% of all unemployed people. It is worth noting, that the education factor is weaker in the case of women; they are better educated in Poland, except at university level, yet more affected by unemployment.

- there is a growing problem of long-term unemployment (over 12 months). At the end of 1999 long-term unemployed people made up 37.8% of all registered unemployed people and the number rose by 10.9% as compared to previous years. As mentioned above these were mostly low qualified people and women.

A. Access to wealth.

Differences between the poorest and the most affluent are getting deeper. The transformation period has not brought the same level of advantages across all social levels. There are groups which are characterised by permanent poverty.

In Poland poverty is assessed using several measures:

- The social minimum, which is defined as a normative model of satisfying everyday needs at a low level whilst ensuring vitality at each stage of life, for bearing children and keeping contacts with society. This measure seems most important for diagnosing social exclusion;

- existence level, actually basic survival level, which allows for satisfying basic needs - food, clothing, hygiene, housing, also including educational needs at the compulsory level;

- relative poverty level which refers to the situation whereby those affected generally do not have sufficient means to live properly, measured on the basis of average expenses or incomes;

- for the needs of social assistance, the OECD method of equivalent income is used.

According to data from the Central Statistical Office from 1998 , the latest year for which figures are available, 50.4% of population did not achieve the level of social minimum (up by 3.7 % as compared to 1997). It may be assumed that this trend has been accelerated by the rise in unemployment). As much as 5.4% of population did not reach the level of basic survival (1.1 % rise). Poverty is also becoming more rooted.

The most affected are people and families of non-earners, that is people who get their incomes from unemployment or social assistance benefits. Almost 81% of such families do not have sufficient resources coming into their household to secure a standard of living that is "acceptable" and 25.8% fail even to enjoy a subsistence level. The second group most affected are small farm-holders. Almost 60% of them do not enjoy the most basic level with regard to their standard of living 6.9% not even the subsistence level.

Groups which have an above average level of living are employers, old age pensioners and self-employed persons. The situation of the last group is the most favourable - 38.4% do not enjoy the acceptable social minimum level; 3.1% do not have the subsistence level.

Poverty is differentiated according to age. In Poland the poor are quite young - poverty exceeds the average level in families in which the main earner is under 34; the least worse off group are those aged over 65 - 38.8% do not reach the social minimum level, 4.4% not the subsistence level. This provides some evidence of the efficiency of pension indexing in previous years and the impact family obligations has on poverty. The situation may get worse with the weakening of the system of indexation.

It is evident that the percentage of people below the poverty level is growing with the number of persons in a household and with the arrival of children. Families with four or more children make up over 50% of all living in poverty.

Another factor is location. Below the national average are people in small towns, up to 20,000 and in villages; above the average are people in bigger towns - the bigger the town, the less the incidence of poverty.

What are the main causes of poverty? According to recent research four causes may be mentioned:

- Long-lasting unemployment. This problem has been discussed above; there is a correlation between the level of unemployment and the level of poverty. When the former decreased in 1997 and 1998, poverty also decreased. The problem is aggravated by the fact that in 1999 only 23% of all unemployed people had the right to unemployment benefit, the rest lived on social assistance, charity and family help. 90%

of the long-term unemployed are deprived the right - depending on the level of unemployment benefits are paid for from 6 to 18 months;

- Another cause of poverty was the drop in real incomes. According to the research, though nominal income grew by 19.7% between 1990 and 1998, real incomes fell by 9% for the whole population (35.2% in agriculture) though they grew for some groups of employees and self-employed (for the last group by 45.1%). There is a growing dispersion of incomes - GNP grew in the period in question by 15.1% which benefited in the main the self-employed (+45.1%) and old age pensioners (+13.6%), the latter due to the mechanism of indexation; the income most affluent 10% of the population was 6.4 times more than those of the 10% of the least affluent. In 1989 10% of the most affluent earned 21.2% of general income and 10% of the least affluent earned 4% of general income. In 1998 10% of the most affluent earned 26.2% of income and 10% of the least affluent 2.2%. Dispersion of incomes ranges from 26.5 times the country average and 55.4 times of minimum wage to 0.5 - 0.6 times of the average and 1.1 to 1.2 times minimum wage (basic schools teachers, nurses);
- The third cause of poverty is the decline of expenses for social assistance despite the fact that needs were growing; three phenomena may be noted. First, there was a 30% growth in the number of unemployed in 1999 as compared with 1998 and 56% of all clients of social assistance are unemployed. Secondly the number of long-term unemployed (who are deprived the right to unemployment benefits) increased. Third, there were cuts in social assistance budget between 1998 and 1999 nominally by 19%, in real terms by 30%. Social welfare payments, as a proportion of GNP also dropped from 2.3% to 1.6% and in state budget from 8.6% to 6.7%. This forced cuts in benefit below the level which was defined in the law on social assistance.
- The fourth cause of poverty were cuts (by 21.6%) in active labour market measures (mostly for public works which were not very effective but offered income and social contact, the financing of job creation for the unemployed (by 40%) and training (by 5.4%). At the same time there was the rise of means for loans offered to the unemployed to kick-start self-employment initiatives (by 16.1%) and for individual training (by 57.8%) which amounted to more help for the more self-dependent and better educated.

Access to education

Education has two main goals:

- Economic: it is the aim to offer employees proper education, both for their own benefit and for the benefit of the country's economy; an important element to be considered in this instance is the needs of the national economy and the demands of national and local labour markets.
- Socio-cultural: these are of a more consumer-orientated character and affect the identity of individuals, allow for the fulfilment of personal aspirations and the rise of cultural levels generally.

The realisation of these goals should be harmonised, though in practice the process comes up against a series of barriers, both economic and related to norms and values.

In Poland there are no formal barriers to accessing to education at any level. There do however remain two types of informal barrier:

- external to individuals and families,
- internal, related to the system of values, the level of individual aspirations and individual talents.

External barriers are more evident. They are strictly connected with such aspects as the level of income and the amount of state and other sources to finance education.

Though the general demand for university education has grown, it was partly due to demographic trends [6]. There are evident barriers in the access to education for some social groups. For example, at the beginning of the 1980s every fourteenth primary school graduate from a rural background became a student after four years high (secondary) school; at present only every one hundred and fortieth becomes a student. This means that young people from families dependent on agriculture have ten times less chance of a university education when compared with ten years ago. This can surely be explained by a tremendous drop in the incomes of this social group. The situation is also unfavourable for the population of small towns. Young people coming from villages and small towns of up to 20,000 people make up 50% of all youths and yet only amount to 2% of university students.

The differentiation begins at the level of primary schools. They are co-financed by State and local budgets (the State finances 75% of teachers' salaries and *gminas* pay for the rest). The economic situation of *gminas* - basic self government administrative units - is much differentiated, thus the amount of money they may devote to education is different too, which means that the situation may aggravate differences in the access to education of children, depending on where they live. This opinion is supported by data: according to research carried out in 1997, local budget expenses for education between the richest and the poorest *gminas* differed as much as 1:70, for example between Warszawa, Katowice, Gdansk, Poznan on the one hand and rural areas in the region of Bielsk Podlaski, Chelm, Przemysl - south-east Poland on the other.

General expenses for education include individual means; yet research shows, that individual expenses for education, for example fees in non public schools, were much higher in regions, mostly towns, where the expenses of *gminas* are also high, which means that inequality is deepening.

Another external barrier are the cuts in public expenditure for education. Compared to other European countries they are low. Between 1980 and 1992 in highly developed European countries expenses for education doubled, reaching 1,089 USD per capita in 1995 whereas in Poland the equivalent figure was 150 USD (or 7 times lower. In the period 1990 to 1997 the share of expenses on education at all levels as a percentage of GNP went down from 4.78% to 4.43% (it was 4.14% in 1993). It was similar for the state budget. The share fell from 16.4% to 14.8% (12.8% in 1993) and was especially evident at university education level (falling from 3.6% in 1990 to 2.9% in 1997).

Access to education has always been correlated with the level of education of parents. Recently this factor has become less influential in comparison to the level of incomes. With very little support from the State while the stipend system offers very small amounts to very few, education for children brings changes in consumption patterns in less affluent families

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[6] Increase in the population of university-education age - 19 to 24 - by 20%

where the aspiration of parents decide how much they are ready to limit their consumption to offer education to their children.

As to **internal barriers** we may talk of aspirations of both parents in relation to their children and the aspirations of the children. These barriers are very important as they limit social mobility in further life.

Research carried out in 1996 in Poland on parental aspirations provided some indicators. Parents value education highly, though it is correlated with the level of their own education, their income level and assessment of the economic situation. What seems new is that aspirations are now similar for both sons and daughters. The research also shows that aspirations and expectations for disabled children are now higher . This is probably driven by increased awareness and improved chances. Despite these important developments the prospects for children vary according to their family circumstances and what part of the country they live In and whether they living in urban or rural areas. There is some evidence to suggest a worrying trend of "inheriting position" within society. According to research, 43% of children with parents without education did not obtain qualifications. On the other hand 52% of children of fathers with university diplomas obtained a university education: the figure for children with fathers who had obtained a basic level of education was only 5%. However, 44% of children, whose parents have only basic vocational education did receive full secondary education.

Disability

Disability is a factor, which affects access to education. In the school year 1996/1997 only 46% of disabled school age children attended schools (including special schools). For the pre-school period (3-5 years) it is even worse - only 5% of disabled children participated at this level of education whereas for the whole population it was about 40%, which is also low because very few children in agricultural areas or children of unemployed mothers and in poor families attend nurseries. Only 15% of disabled youths aged 15-19 graduated in the year 1996/1997 from any type of a secondary school, including basic vocational schools. About 27% of the population of disabled youths in this age did not attend any school.

CHAPTER III: ANALYSIS OF RISK GROUPS.

1. Introductory remarks

In the first years of the period of transition the research proved that it was hardly possible to define groups at special risk, which means there was no single feature (such as young age, being a female, having a given type of education and/or qualifications, etc.) which put a person at the risk of social exclusion. What really caused exclusion was a syndrome of features which actually resulted in a disadvantaged social situation.

To define groups at risk in the labour market we could use an official list presented by the National Labour Office. It includes: women, youths, disabled people, people with low qualifications, people working in declining areas of industry, people living in areas threatened with structural unemployment.

When discussing groups that are at risk we should analyse the correlation between various factors causing social exclusion.

As defined above, we identified three causes of social exclusion:

- reduced access to labour market;
- reduced access to education and/or vocational training;
- reduced access to wealth.

Within each cause we may identify various factors of social exclusion:

- with regard to access to the labour market we considered:
  - location;
  - age;
  - gender;
  - qualifications.
- with regard to access to education we analysed:
  - location;
  - the level of incomes;
  - aspirations.
- with regard to access to wealth we considered:
  - access to the labour market;
  - qualifications;
  - location;
  - gender;

* family responsibilities.

Upon this scheme we tried to identify groups at risk.

2. Groups with reduced opportunities within the labour market

The Polish Constitution guarantees equal treatment of women and men in the labour market. How does it work in practice? The unfavourable condition of young people or women does not result from the existing law. It is rather that the system of education and especially vocational education, is not yet adjusted to the demands of the labour market and from the attitudes of employers who lack the motivation to employ either women or young people. Women are considered to be more devoted to family life and they have entitlements to special leaves when bearing children[7]. Furthermore they are considered more risky employees. It means that the very system of social security, though acting in favour of families with children, is undermining the equal opportunities of women and especially the young. As for young people research shows that employers generally consider them to be less effective than older workers, they are considered to be more demanding about conditions of pay and work; and finally less responsible and less devoted to the place of work. In the opinions of employers, school graduates lack practical skills, which means having to organise on-the-job training, thus causing additional expenses.

To be more specific about access to work. According to research there are two main groups of factors defining the disadvantaged situation of groups and persons in the labour market. The first refers to where people live and second to socio-demographic features such as age, gender and education.

Inhabitants of underdeveloped areas

Most affected by unemployment are people living in underdeveloped areas. In the first years of transformation they were mostly people employed in declining industries - textiles, heavy industry, also in regions with industrial monocultures - coal mining region, and the machinery industry. The transformation of the economy reduced some of the problems in these areas and, at a later period, unemployment was transferred to the northern and north western regions of Poland due to the decline of agriculture and especially the collapse of collective (state) farms.

Regional differences in unemployment can be easily illustrated by recent data (end of 1999 and January 2000). While the average unemployment rate in Poland was 13.6%:

- in the Warminsko-Mazurski region - north Poland, it was 23.7%;
- in the Lubuski region – in west Poland it was 18.4%;
- in Zachodniopomorski - north-west Poland, it was 18.3%;
- in Mazowiecki - central Poland, including the capital, it was 10.0%;
- in Slaski – in the south-west, it was 10.6%,;
- in Malopolski - south Poland, it was 10.8%.

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[7] The law gives the right to child-care leave both to men and women, yet only about 10% of fathers decide to stop work.

Influence of socio-demographic features

As for socio-demographic features, the most influential for the labour market are age, gender and education.

Age. Since the very beginning of the process of transformation the Polish unemployed have tended to be young - it affected one-quarter to one-third of the population under 24 years of age. The rate of youth unemployment for the whole transformation period has been higher than the average unemployment rate, yet correlated with the local unemployment rate. It was highest in the years 1993-1994.

The most affected group of young unemployed people are school leavers i.e. those who after leaving school, did not undertake any employment (they keep graduate status for twelve months after leaving school). At the end of January 2000 154,300 unemployed young people had the status of a school graduate - an increase of 4,500 in one month. School graduates of post-lyceum schools (mostly four or five semesters of vocationally oriented education) and secondary vocational and basic vocational schools comprised 79.1% of all unemployed school leavers, compared to just 8% for university graduates.

Equal opportunities. Women have always been at greater risk of unemployment - their number always exceeding 50% of the total number of unemployed. At the end of June 2000 their number was 1,368,300, or 56.1% of the total number of unemployed people. As may be seen from table 2 in the Annex female unemployment has always been higher, though in general women are better educated. Though fewer women have university education, more have received full secondary education whereas for men the majority simply completed basic vocational education.

Education. As in the case of age and gender, since the very beginning the unemployed in Poland have been the poorly educated. Over 60% of the total number of unemployed are those with a low level of education - completed or even uncompleted basic education and basic vocational. One in four of the unemployed has, at most, completed basic (elementary) education. Some positive changes have already started at secondary school level. In some regions there have been basic changes in programmes of vocational schools to make them more market oriented; fewer pupils end their education at the level of basic vocational schools. Detailed data on changes in education may be found in the annex. There is a growing interest in university education, though chances to reach it are unevenly distributed.

Disabled persons

A specific group at risk are people with disabilities, though they comprise only 1.4% (the rate does not change much in time) of the total number of unemployed people. There are two possible explanations for this phenomenon. One is their low level of vocational activity - the employment rate of this group is shown in table 3 in the Annex.

In 1998 of the 4.5 million disabled people aged 15 and over only 838,000 were economically active, mostly persons with lesser impairments (only 4.7% of the most severely disabled were employed). 19% of all employed disabled persons were employed in sheltered enterprises.

Disabled people evidently lack hope of obtaining employment and thus seldom register as unemployed. This affects their unemployment rate. Another explanation of a comparatively low unemployment rate can be special regulation concerning employment of disabled people, including a quota-levy system, sheltered workshops, loans to start self-employment, loans to employers, special provisions to employers both in sheltered workshops and mainstream employment. On average, for each offer of work there were about 20 registered disabled persons, whereas it was 284 for the unemployed in general.

On the other hand the low level of economic activity among people with disabilities can be explained by their low level of qualifications, which is the result of reduced access to education, which will be discussed later.

3. Groups with reduced access to education

Actually in Poland there is no problem with access to education as such. The new Constitution prolongs the period of compulsory education to up to 18 years of age. Article 32 of the Constitution forbids any form of discrimination, Article 33 declares the equality of men and women in education, health care, employment and wages, social security and social participation. Courts, including the Constitutional Tribunal, are the guarantors of these rights.

Except for disabled children the rate of dropping out of the education system is very small. An overwhelming majority of basic school leavers continue education at basic vocational school level, though there is a trend where students follow full secondary education instead of solely basic vocational education. Generally the demand for education has increased in Poland in recent years; the number of young people receiving full secondary education (general and vocational) has doubled due mainly to three factors:

- it is generally realised that better education means better chances in the labour market and higher wages;
- due to demographic changes a larger group of young people is entering the age of higher education (up by 20%);
- in recent years the number of people attending university was also the result of the establishment of new universities, even in smaller towns which means better access to education at regional level. And public universities have also broadened their intake.

That being so these conditions do not ensure full access to education. There is, first of all reduced access to education, which offers progress at further levels and for the labour market. While discussing the idea of social exclusion we mentioned the problem of reduced choice. **Children from villages, especially in distant, underdeveloped** areas have less choice - they tend to opt for schools which are located in their immediate vicinity and not those that offer a good level of education or training in a profession demanded by the local labour market. The reasons are mostly economic, though transport and other barriers should not be forgotten.

There is an acute problem of **young people brought up in families, who in the past were employed in state farms**. For the lack of income, low aspirations of their parents and themselves, low self-esteem and expectations, high unemployment in the region and

transport problems, social problem such as alcohol abuse, they have little chance to get adequate education and are threatened by inheriting the disadvantaged social position of their parents. This group needs support in the first instant.

Low income is a growing barrier to education. As poverty most affected **families living in small towns and villages**, reduced access to education became the problem of youth living there.

As already mentioned, there is a negative correlation which deepens regional differences in access to education: more individual expenses for education are accompanied by more local finances in more affluent regions, while less individuals on lesser means relay on lower local budgets for education; poor state budget conditions do not satisfactorily make up for these differences.

There is another problem, though probably still marginal in Poland namely **dropping out from school**. The scale of the problem ranges from 2.7% at the basic school level, 5.4% at basic vocational and 3.8% at secondary vocational level.[8] Programmes referred to this group will be discussed later.

We should also mention the Polish **Roma** population, though it is a small minority - according to various sources they number between 25,000-30,000. Yet, their situation as to education may be called tragic. According to the data from the Ministry of Education, 20% of Roma children do not attend any schools, and even if they attend, they seldom graduate. The proposal to organise special classes for the Roma children is controversial and considered as segregation.

4. Groups with reduced access to wealth

A strong factor abetting poverty is the low level of vocational activity. Among all those who live in poverty, the largest part are unemployed. As discussed in the previous chapter, no matter what measurement of poverty is considered, the most affected by poverty are the **families of non-earners**, mostly the unemployed, receiving either unemployment or social assistance benefits. Another group of these families are **small farm-holders**, mostly with hidden unemployment.

Another factor creating poverty is low qualifications. Obviously the level of education affects wages: those employed with higher education (university level) earn 44% more than the average; 50% more within the private sector, 29% more within the public sector. Incomes of people with university diplomas in the private sector vary 2.5:1 as against 1.5:1 for persons with elementary education in the public sector [9]. We may add that the latter discrepancy is not so big for many reasons: official incomes in the private sector are in many cases, especially in small firms, much lower than in reality. Second, in the public sector there are underpaid groups, such as teachers, nurses and most medical doctors. Nevertheless family incomes with highly educated members are 75% higher than for families in which the head has only basic vocational education. Below the line of primary poverty are 10% of **families**

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[8] Narodowe Obserwatorium Ksztalcenia i Szkolenia Zawodowego, Polish National Observatory Team 1998

[9] Podzial dochodu narodowego i nierownosci dochodowe. Raport Rady strategii spoleczno-gospodarczej, 1998

with elementary education, 6% of **families with basic vocational education** and 2% of persons with high school and very marginally people with higher, university education.

The next factor under the discussion, affecting access to wealth, is location. The average wage is up to 50% lower in underdeveloped areas than in big towns. In big towns 5% of families earn less than the average compared with 19% among the **agricultural population** [10]. Families living in villages and relying only on farming have incomes that are 30% lower than for the urban population. In big towns with over 200,000 inhabitants 5% of families earn less than half of the average salary compared with 19% for the agricultural population. Some of this population live in primary poverty.

Gender is another factor. Men earn 11% more than average, women 12% less. Among the unemployed 42% are men and 58% women. Besides, underpaid professions, such as teachers, nurses, doctors, social workers are mostly women. 90% of **one parent families** are **headed by women.** Such families are over-represented in poverty.

Polish poverty is differentiated according to age, which is correlated with family responsibilities. Most affected are **young families** with family responsibilities **especially the main bread winner is unemployed**. Also those young people who lost their jobs in industry and returned to their villages make up the so-called hidden agricultural unemployment, which is difficult to measure.

More affected by poverty are families with a lone parent and **multi-children families**.

In the majority of European countries, facing a population decrease, multi-children families would not be considered a social problem. Yet, in Poland the opposite is true; the bigger the family is, the more often it becomes a poor family. Among families with one child only, the average income is 17% higher than the country average; with 3 children it is 30% less than average, with 4 children 40% less. According to research 15% of families with 4 and more children live in primary poverty. The disturbing fact is that children and young people under 18 years of age, who make up 24.7% of the population make up 35.4% of the poor; 9.1% of children live in primary poverty.

For several years old age was becoming less and less a social problem. However, with a declining indexation rate - it was planned only for 0.3% over planned inflation - the situation of **pensioners** may become difficult.

There is the evident correlation:

- The higher the education, the fewer the children, the higher income per capita.
- 9.8% of the town population, compared with only 1.9% in agriculture, has university education. 30% of the town population, compared with 54.6% of the village population, have only elementary education.
- When one takes into account that between 1990/1991 and 1997/1998 the level of educational attainment grew in general from 80.1% to 87.1% at the high school level and from 12.9% to 29.2% at a higher (university) level it denotes the increasing backwardness of village populations with poor prospects of social advancement for

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[10] For details see pages 8 to 11

village youths. It is quite evident that their future situation in the labour market will be worse too.

5. National and ethnic minorities

We have also asked a question if we may consider national and ethnic minorities groups excluded from society. The group is very much differentiated according to many criteria. First of all, social exclusion in case of national and ethnic minorities is defined differently. According to Park and Stonequist it means living on a border of different cultures and an absence of full participation in any of them. From the sociological perspective a national minority is a minority which is marginalised by the very fact of inability to meet its specific needs to a degree comparable to the majority of population, even in case of the lack of discrimination practices on the part of either state and/or society.

In general, national and ethnic minorities are small in Poland; they make up 1.2%3% of the population depending on the source of information; only some associations of the minorities declare that their share is 4.6%. The biggest is the German minority - they make up between

26,000- 500,000; the associations report one million Polish citizens of German nationality, however the data are not reliable. The next minorities are the Ukrainians and Lemka population – 70,000 to 300,000; next is the Belarussian minority – 70,000 to 300,000 and the Roma – 25,000 to 30,000. Others are the Lithuanians – 9,000 to 20,000, the Slovaks – 5,000 to 20,000 and the Jews – 3,000 to 15,000.

Policies for minority groups in Poland is not the factor of marginalisation. Existing problems surrounding the access to wealth, education and the labour market are caused by various factors, related to the level of local development, also to specific features of some minorities. With the exception of the Roma population, the economic situation of minorities is not worse than the majority and in some cases, e.g. the Germans and the Lithuanians, it is even better. Differences in their social condition manifested by access to social services and the labour market is more dependent on the level of regional development, the situation in the local labour market than on belonging to the minority. It mostly refers to eastern regions of Poland with a low level of development, where the Belarussians and Lithuanians live. The situation is reversed in the west - in Opolszczyzna, with the German minority, which belongs to the best developed region, with much investment, especially from Germany.

In case of the Ukrainians, the Lithuanians and the Slovaks, who are keen on preserving their ethnic identity, their situation does not differ from that of the Polish population. They are characterised by similar education aspirations, vocational activity and work mobility, and material status.

The level of assimilation is differentiated. In case of the Belarussians it is very advanced and the main factors of assimilating into Polish society is education and migration to towns - in the east minorities live mostly in villages. By a process of polonisation of the better off, best educated and pro-active, the remaining minority is faced with the worsening of its social structure. It is characterised by a lower level of education, a bigger share of employed people in agriculture and a smaller share of employed outside agriculture, especially in professions demanding higher qualifications; in consequence, they have a lower level of incomes.

The situation of the German minority is different. We may call it a decomposition of features of social exclusion. The material status of the German minority is higher in comparison to the Polish majority and the educational coefficient understood as the share of adults with university and full secondary education is lower. According to research by the Silesian Institute at the beginning of 1990s the Silesian population's share of university education was six times lower when compared to the Polish population. This phenomenon, apart from historical reasons, may be explained by a high level of traditionalism among the Silesian society. There is strong pressure to pass down and continue the professions that are linked with heavy industry (mostly coal mining) which demanded in the past mostly basic vocational education. At present, a chance to have a dual citizenship and migrate to Germany has become, for many young people, a substitute for getting adequate education and a permanent place on the labour market. Unqualified work in Germany is a more treasured value to formal education, which could enable a professional career in Poland.

The ethnic minority which may be considered "excluded" are the Roma population. Due to the lack of current data we may quote those from the 1980s [11], which indicate that out of 21,311 Roma there were 10,711 persons of productive age and only 27% (2,887) had access to stable employment. According to recent assumptions, the employment of the Roma population fell by half, which means that their activity rate is seven times lower for this group than for the rest of population.

To sum up apart from the Roma population, belonging to a minority is not a primary factor of social position. More important is where people live and what are their social and demographic features.

As for the Roma population, as in other countries, there are some proposals concerning how to improve their situation; in the past there were mostly administrative methods of settling them in one place. This has met with some success given that the level of education and employment of the Roma population is higher in Poland when compared to other Central and East-European countries.

6. Conclusions

We want to end this chapter by presenting short characteristics of groups which we consider to be at the risk of social exclusion. They are:

- Young people living in villages. This covers young people who live in underdeveloped areas in the south and south-east of Poland and also in some regions of central Poland. This covers young people who live in families on small individual farms, far from big towns with poor transport connections and which offer a chance of employment and a market for their products. They are brought up in families with low incomes, both they and in most cases their parents, have low aspirations. They are characterised by low self-esteem and a low expectation of progress in their future life because of unemployed parents and no offers of work. They have reduced access to education - both in a geographical sense - distance, transport problems - and in the reduced choice of the type of school with a lower level of teaching right from the start.

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[11] P. Madejczyk, Mniejszosci narodowe w Polsce, 1998

- There is another group of young people from agricultural families at the risk of social exclusion. This covers young people living in such areas, mostly in the north and north-east of Poland and suffer a number of interlinked problems which are exacerbated by additional problems such as alcoholism and the inability to act. There are no offers of work for them, they are not land-owners, they have no means for becoming self-employed in or outside agriculture. Even if they had financial means, they lack qualifications to run a business. This group should be carefully examined (case studies) to discover if they are only threatened by social exclusion or are already excluded. They are definitely excluded from the labour market – they have no access to work, and are thus excluded from wealth - no income, low incomes, mostly living on benefits from social assistance, casual work. However they are not yet formally excluded from education. they mostly attend at least basic vocational schools, though they do not obtain skills that are in demand on the labour market assuming that there is a any labour market demand in their localities. The housing problem is also the barrier to migration either to bigger towns.
- A specific group of youth at risk are some school leavers. Though they have already made use of their access to education (this group includes graduates from all types of schools, including full secondary and university), their prospects and material status depends on many factors. They generally have reduced access to the labour market, because of the attitudes of employers and their own behaviour[12]. Their situation is differentiated.
    - It is quite safe in case of university graduates. In general they are seldom registered as unemployed though in biggest towns, especially in Warsaw, the rate of unemployment in this group is increasing. However, their potential is high, they can easily get new qualifications and abilities, they are more eager to migrate and they are not a risk group.
    - Graduates from general secondary schools are in a less fortunate situation for they lack professional skills. However, 96% of them continue education at higher level - university (73%) or post-secondary vocational (23%). The least fortunate are those who do not enter universities, living in small towns or villages. For them prospects of finding a job without vocational training are small, though we may judge their potential as high albeit it with necessary outside help.
    - The situation of graduates from basic and secondary vocational schools is differentiated according to the type of qualifications and location. If they have skills demanded on the local labour market, they may feel quite safe. For some, re-qualification courses may be advisable to help them adjust to demands of their local labour markets.
    - The least educated with or even without completed basic education, may be considered a risk group. In their situation, they may be considered as school dropouts as obligatory education is provided up to at least basic vocational level. A new education system, described later, may bring changes in this sphere. For persons without education some basic courses followed by vocational training may be the solution.

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[12] see page 11

- Disabled people, who although they cannot be considered excluded, should be a group of concern. It is a group differing in age, education and family status. As a group, disabled persons are less educated; though without formal barriers, they have more difficult access to education and the labour market, depending on the type of impairment, the situation of the family, the level of education of parents, place of living. Yet, because of much lower attainment levels and low economic activity, they should be considered at risk of social exclusion.

  In our opinion integrative education should be an option and for many reasons. First, it offers integration, helps disabled people open to social contacts and make the whole society more vulnerable to the problem of disability. Second, it is less expensive. Special schools are very well developed in Poland but they are a very costly form of education and are less effective. Third, special schools are in themselves a barrier to further progress in education. Graduates from special basic schools meet problems to enter more open forms of education, though the situation has much improved. Fourth, open schools are more accessible in a geographical sense. Everyday transport to a distant special school is costly, living in a boarding school breaks family links. All these arguments encourage the popularisation of integration in education and in future life, including integrative employment.

  For older disabled persons, without qualifications or with remote qualifications, qualification and re-qualification courses are advisable. Depending on their type of impairment, physical and intellectual potential, they could be offered various forms of education and/or training.

- There is an acute problem of the long-term unemployed. They are comparatively older, and a larger proportion has completed only basic schooling (if any). Regarded as "secondary illiterate", some of them may be difficult clients for vocational training. As mentioned above women make a bigger proportion of long-term unemployed. They often live in underdeveloped areas, are not very young, often having small children. For some of them self-employment in local small services could be advisable, however they may need, apart from financial help, some training in how to run a small business. Some less educated women may need qualification or re-qualification courses to enter or re-enter labour market after a long period away from the work place. Generally less educated long-term unemployed people or those with remote qualifications need re-qualification courses.

- The last group may be questionable, as it is difficult to consider it socially excluded. Yet, in near future, with raising qualifications, this group may create a problem. It is the group of better-educated persons living in underdeveloped areas. They are able, from the point of view of their qualifications and intellectual potential, to undertake business activities; but for lack of finance they remain passive. Even if they get financial support from, for example, the Labour Fund or international programmes, they may need instruction how to run small business.

CHAPTER IV: POLICIES AND MEASURES

1. General policies

In 1990 Poland adopted new laws on unemployment and on social assistance. The first was made the basis for registering unemployed people and introducing both social protection for the unemployed (unemployment benefits) and various active measures against unemployment (such as public works and supported employment, loans for self-employment, loans to employers, training for the unemployed, and most of all vocational guidance, job placement and advice). In subsequent years the law has been revised many times.

The law on social assistance offered help to low income families in a way which would not hamper their own activity and entrepreneurship. There was also special legislation to help disabled persons seeking work. This law will be discussed later.

The reform of education has just started, preceded by many changes mentioned before. More children follow full secondary education. Programmes were revised in order to make them more market oriented. The non public sector in the sphere of education is developing quite well.

Alleviating poverty

It is very difficult to alleviate poverty during a recession and when a country is undergoing deep economic structural changes. Besides, Poland has initiated four big reforms since January 1999 (pension system, state administration, health service and education). Each of them needs money, requiring cuts in certain spheres of state expenditure.

We can point to three ways of diminishing poverty, realised in Poland.

a) social assistance;

b) charity;

c) minimum wage regulation;

d) Public social assistance.

In 1990 the Polish parliament passed a new law on social assistance. It stressed the role of an individual in need of help and introduced a variety of benefits. The level of income per capita, which entitled to financial aid, was equal to the minimum pension. Since 1996 each family below a certain income is entitled to aid and the level is decided according to the equivalence scale set out by the OECD (first adult as 1, each second person over 15 years is 0.7 and each below 15 years is 0.5 point). Another factor that can ensure entitlement to this support is the experience of problems associated with family brake down such as alcoholism, drug addiction, unemployment, disability, having many children, being a lone parent etc. Some benefits (for children in poor families, for excessive housing costs, for pregnant women, for disabled people who have never been able to work) are financed from the state budget and some (offering a meal, place to live, clothing) are the responsibility of *gminas*. In

point of fact benefits have been reduced. For example, the unemployed who have exhausted the right to unemployment benefit receive 83.8% of the quota defined in the law. The social benefit for persons who became disabled before the age of 15 and have never been able to work is 90.6% of the defined quota. This cutback is mostly due to insufficient means for providing social assistance.

Who are the clients of social assistance? The most numerous group are the unemployed, then multi-children families; altogether about 3.6 million families and 10.7 million citizens out of about 39 million people receive some kind of aid from social assistance centres. As already mentioned, unemployment grew during the last year by 30%, only 23% of the unemployed have the right to unemployment benefits and there was a 30% cut of real expenses for social assistance. It has aggravated the problem of poverty in Poland.

a) Charity

Charity has a long tradition in Poland. Though many so-called "social organisations" existed in Poland before transformation, they were not very active in the field of alleviating poverty. The role of NGOs will be discussed later in this chapter.

b) Minimum wage regulation.

There is a regulation on the minimum wage in Poland. It was introduced several years ago and each year the tripartite committee under the Minister of Labour and Social Policy has to negotiate the percentage of indexation. When negotiations broke down recently the percentage was, according to the law, decided by the Minister.

Overcoming unemployment.

Much more can be said on the general instruments of overcoming unemployment, though there were cuts in this sphere in recent months as well. According to the law on employment and overcoming unemployment, the unemployed may be offered any of the following:

- public works organised by *gminas* to do a given job, usually simple, not demanding high qualifications;
- intervention posts, financed from the Labour Fund (they should actually end up with the permanent employment of an unemployed person);
- vocational training and retraining;
- loans for starting self-employment;
- job placement, job clubs and job "stock exchanges";
- work shadowing for school graduates, stipends for continuing education,
- subventions for employers of school graduates,
- voluntary work for NGOs.

The government, which took power in 1997, presented a National Strategy for Employment, which aims at increasing the level of economic activity (to 62% - 64%). The main instrument to achieve this aim is rising the qualifications of employees and engaging the social partners into this process. The strategy also provides for introducing new rules for fixing the minimum wage, for financial preferences to employers who organise on-the-job training and

who employ school leavers. The strategy is also aiming at restructuring employment, which had been brought about by the necessary shifts from declining industries i.e. from agriculture. It also promotes flexible forms of employment, such as teleworking, work from distance, on-call work etc. It also provides for the employment of women. The strategy proposes some reduction of "unjustified" work protection, which may be understood as a concession benefiting of employers. Another problem weakening potential effects of the strategy is the lack of means. There has been reduction in active measures of overcoming unemployment. Labour offices happen to lack even the finance for paying due insurance contributions for registered unemployed.

2. Measures directed at special groups

Since 1996 school graduates were deprived of the right to benefits; instead they were offered several programmes of activity - subsidised posts by employers, practices etc. There is also a special offer for dropouts. They may combine education and training with an employer for twelve months at the expense of the Labour Fund.

There are special programmes for groups considered at risk on the labour market. The groups are:

- The long-term unemployed;
- lone parents or with an unemployed spouse;
- low qualified persons;
- persons who lost a job as a result of closing a collective farm (high unemployment in North of Poland);
- school graduates (mostly after basic vocational schools);
- disabled people;
- persons leaving prisons;
- young people that have completed compulsory military service.

There are special regulations on disabled people. There is a quota-levy system in Poland with many forms of help for persons employing disabled people, special preferences for sheltered enterprises and loans for disabled persons who set up their own business. There are also special programmes for disabled people and their employers in small towns and in agriculture.

People with disabilities were discussed as a group threatened with social exclusion, though generally in Poland much has been done to promote the vocational and social integration of this group. Policy towards disability and disabled people provided undertakings in many spheres. The problem has been considered a governmental responsibility for government through adopting a Government Programme of social and vocational rehabilitation of disabled people. There are also many programmes on public and private television, radio and other media. Through donations the State supports organisations for the disabled . There is a representation of such NGOs in the structure of the Government Plenipotentiary for Disabled Persons. Persons with disabilities have the right to receive social and economic support.

Insured persons have the right to insurance pensions in case they are considered unable to work. If able to work they are entitled to various forms of help from both labour services and local authorities, including social assistance. For people who have never been able to work there is an entitlement to a non-contributory pension; a family with a disabled people is included in various programmes of social assistance promoting social integration, including social work, day care centres etc.

Disabled people are entitled to vocational guidance, to labour exchange services and to vocational training. All this is financed from the State Fund for Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons (PFRON), made up from levies and other payments from employers; also from state donations. In spite of this, the economic activity of disabled people is very low.

To improve chances for social contacts the State Fund for Rehabilitation of Disabled People, with support from local authorities, is designed to ban architectural barriers. According to law, any new public building must be accessible for disabled people. Also from the Fund the production of low-floor city buses for public transport was initiated and a system of special taxies was organised.

It was also said that one of the problems relating to persons with disabilities, especially the young, is their access to education. On the one hand for many years we have had a well-developed system of special education for children with various types of impairments [13]. The problem is that this system is segregating; besides, on the secondary level, it offers only a narrow range of vocations. Another problem is that in such schools children with various types of impairments are taught together - for example retarded children with different intellectual abilities. Some of the children are not included (by a decision of the educational authorities they are allowed not to attend any school or are tutored individually). However, many changes were initiated in this sphere too (see the annex). There are many initiatives for integrated education; there are integrated schools where disabled children learn together with the able bodied; also integrated classes in the mainstream education. On the basis of the Law on psychic health each mentally disabled child is entitled to a defined number of hours for education, no matter how retarded they are.

3. Improving the access to education

As to education, though state financing is steadily declining and much of the expenditure has been taken over by local budgets and individuals, there is a growing interest in getting a better education. The problem is that meeting these needs and answering to the interests of young people and their parents is unevenly distributed among groups and regions.

Differences in income are growing while the perceived necessity to pay for education (e.g. fees in private schools which are considered to offer a better educational level and better prospects for going to university; fees at both state and private universities,) generates barriers in the access to education for children from poor families, especially for farmers' families.

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[13] some of them well known - for example the school for blind children in Laski or the school for deaf children run by the Institute for the Deaf

Schools lack the means to organise extra lessons for children having learning problems, which hamper their chances of progress.

There are some positive changes in secondary education. For several years there has been a shift from basic vocational to full secondary education, either general or vocational; some basic vocational schools "produced" unemployed young people. The number of students attending university is close to the European average.

Educational reform is under way. It is hard to judge its effects as to the question of improving access. While the rise in the number of young people postponing career choice and opting to continue their education is encouraging the lack of funding for education may cause further disparities. Access may become easier for children from wealthy, town families, with well educated parents that have high educational aspirations for their children as compared with children from less fortunate backgrounds.

The aim of the educational reforms is to popularise full secondary education and to increase the number of secondary school graduates continuing with university education, to adjust the system of education at all levels to the needs of the labour market and to make education more flexible.

In September 1999 the process of reform commenced. Poland has a new system including six years of primary school (starting from age 6), then three years of compulsory gymnasium, followed either by a lyceum (general or vocationally oriented) ending with a maturity exam; or by 2-3 years vocational school, offering education which allows for flexibility in the labour market. Graduates of the latter group are also allowed to continue education up to university level after an additional two years supplementary lyceum. The highest level will include six to eight semesters of licentiate studies and full M.A. studies, plus doctorates at academic centres (universities).

4. The role of NGOs in preventing social exclusion

There is a growing role for NGOs in Poland. They are active in many spheres of social life. Their legal status varies (the law on associations and the law on foundations), some operate across the country with local branches, some are local, some have a vast spectrum of activities, some are devoted to one group of problems or one group of people. Traditionally existing organisations offered help to people in poverty (Polish Committee on Social Assistance, Polish Red Cross Organisation). There were several organisations for disabled people (Polish Union Of the Deaf, Polish Union of the Blind), an organisation helping children (Association of Friends of Children) and also Trade Unions yet many considered them too subordinated to state policy and not sufficiently independent in their activities. No matter what was their level of dependence, the activists of these organisations made good grounds for the development of NGOs in Poland during the period of transformation.

At the beginning of 1995 almost 50,000 non-governmental organisations were registered. According to central register [14] only about 32,000 show any form of activity. They are of different size, either central and local and they deal with various aims.

According to research 42% of all NGOs are active in the field of education, 33% organise humanitarian actions, are active in the sphere of social aid and assistance, 15% are working in local development.

NGOs are not very active on the labour market. According to data from National Labour Office in 1997 only 25 of them were organising job clubs, labour exchange, training on active job seeking and entrepreneurship incubators delegated to labour offices. Forty NGOs engaged in local development were also active in tackling labour market problems, especially job creation in agricultural areas.

NGOs are also running schools. In the school year 1996/1997 they ran 1% of basic schools and 2% of basic vocational schools. The number of full secondary and university level institutions run by NGOs is small. There are also new associations which have set up private schools in Poland [15].

According to ILO conventions Poland has a system of state labour exchange and job placement. Yet, under the control of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy there are several non-public agencies. They have adjusted their activities to a more segmented labour market, offering a labour exchange (for example to corporations seeking top specialists). They also offer part-time and seasonal work for less qualified job seekers and enterprises involved in (for example) seasonal production. There is also a non-profit association for unemployed women, which helps them find work on the labour market. There are also local associations of unemployed people based on mutual help principles.

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[14] E. Les, Od filantropii do pomocniczosci, Warszawa 2000

[15] For the whole post-war period Poland had private education at all levels, the majority set up and run by the Roman-Catholic church, also run by unions of disabled persons - they were mostly basic vocational schools.

CHAPTER V: METHODOLOGIES OF APPROACHING RISK GROUPS

1. General remarks

At the beginning of transformation period unemployment became the most dangerous social ailment afflicting Polish society. After 50 years of full employment - some called it redundancy employment, hidden unemployment, social employment - Polish governments had to learn how to cope with the problem, having few specialists in this field. A first step involved offering social protection to people excluded from the labour market and to set up labour services. Year by year legislation became more refined and better adjusted to the needs of the labour market. Measures became better addressed to groups most endangered by exclusion from the labour market. Apart from the general legislation and measures for special groups (described above), there were special programmes which aimed at solving the problem of unemployment, poverty and insufficient qualifications in underdeveloped regions as well as the problems of special groups. Hereby we present examples of such programmes.

2. Programmes for the long-term unemployed.

In terms of the labour market, policy on rural population is an object of growing concern, as according to data in 1999 persons living in villages made up 44% of all unemployed. Pockets of unemployment are especially concentrated in the north and north-west of Poland where collective farms were dominant for many years.

A good example on how to improve the situation was a project realised in cooperation with a Regional Labour Office and Warminsko-Mazurskie Training Centre, called "Olsztyn project for vocational activity of the long-term unemployed" (Olsztyn - name of the capital of the region). It provided for tri-module training for the long-term unemployed - three units were directed at getting permanent employment: integrative-equalising unit, psychosocial activation and vocational training. The aim of the first unit was to integrate a group, to learn communication, cooperation and self-presentation. Participants were provided with instruction in reading and writing at a high level (including writing a CV) and basic mathematics. The aim of the second unit was to mobilise unemployed people through raising their self-esteem, inspiring them to meet challenges and to learn how to actively seek for work. The aim of the third unit was to equip unemployed persons with vocational skills demanded by the local labour market. Altogether the course lasted 1,000 teaching hours. At the pilot stage 135 persons participated, mostly women aged 30-40 years. The project met with great interest.

3. Programmes for school-leavers

There were several projects concerning youth, especially school leavers. In 1995 the law on employment and overcoming unemployment was changed, i.e. to introduce new forms of

mobilising young people, offering school graduates stipends, subsidised trial employment and training instead of unemployment benefits.

In 1998 a new project entitled "*Absolwent*" (school leaver/graduate) was initiated. The aim of this project was to make school leavers more active in finding work. To make it possible the project provided for more offers of non-subsidised work, for good information and building up partnership between the unemployed and the employers for increasing the number of posts. To change the attitudes of school leavers and to increase their chances on the labour market they were offered training. There were also provisions for employers ready to employ school graduates. The project also provided for the more territorial mobility of school leavers. About 25% of all registered school leavers declared interest to become participants in the project. According to data in December 1998 as many as 27,634 school leavers finished active job seeking workshops. One-third found permanent employment, a statistic which may be considered a success. Participants in the project paid over 60,000 visits to employers while job seeking. 1,248 labour stock exchanges were organised and 17 labour fairs.

4. Programmes for rural young people

Another project was addressed to young people from agricultural families, which engaged several partners: the Treasure Ownership Agricultural Agency in Olsztyn (it offered special provisions for purchase or leasing of farms owned by the Agency, financed training, guaranteed loans to new farmers), Regional Labour Office, the Bank of Food Economy (offered credits to set up new posts for the agricultural population) and the Agricultural Advisory Centre (responsible for training, advice on business, instruction for farming activities etc). Also the Chamber of Craftsmen, engaged to promote the project among members, helped to direct training in crafts demanded by the local market and promoted crafts among the unemployed. The programme started in mid-1998 for people that had experienced unemployment for at least three years, that were aged 18-34, were living in villages and had no qualifications or qualifications that were not in demand. This programme also met with great interest, but no evaluation of it is yet available.

As discussed above, there is a problem of access to education for children in state-farming regions. To increase life and educational chances of children from collective farming areas the Treasury Ownership Agricultural Agency initiated the programme to support this group. The partners in this project were the Polish Foundation for Children and Youth, the Foundation for Access to Water, the Agricultural Branch of "Solidarity". The project consisted of three components:

- stipend system covering the costs of secondary education (food and accommodation, purchase of school books, transport etc.), addressed to children from the poorest families; altogether in the first phase over 1,600 pupils were included from various regions of the country; the plan was to cover another one thousand the following year.
- training for teachers from primary schools aimed at offering knowledge in how to solve problems of children from post-state farm areas, offered in two sessions; in two phases the project included over 180 teachers;
- the third unit was aimed at activating those receiving stipends to engage in solving problems in their localities, to activate local society.

5. Programmes for early dropouts

In the previous chapter we mentioned the problem of premature dropping out of the school system. Though unemployment was not yet a social problem, back in the 1960s a special programme addressed to school dropouts was initiated, called "Voluntary Labour Corps". It was aimed at young people rejected by their social environment, socially maladjusted, having neither education nor vocational training. The idea was to unite work with education/training and social re-adaptation, creating conditions in which young people could gain economic and social independence through work by methods of education and re-socialisation. In the 1990s this programme was included in the system of labour offices. The task of labour offices was to recruit unattended youths, without vocation, threatened with social demoralisation and exclusion, to ensure free education and/or vocational training, to provide for health care and accommodation.

The task of the structures of the Corps is to organise the process of work and education, with particular focus on vocational training, provision of social rehabilitation and control over the whole process. The programmes last two to three years and include young people over 15 years of age. In the process of decentralisation of labour offices the supervision on Corps was delegated to the regional level. A draft law is under discussion to make it a centralised structure again under the National Labour Office.

6. Targeted programmes for disabled persons

In 1993 and 1994 there were two programmes for a group of better educated disabled people in the form of grants for the purchase of personal computers or adaptation of individual cars to ensure transport to and from work (mostly for persons with mobility impairments).

After amending the law on employment it became impossible for disabled people who opted for self-employment to obtain **both** a loan from the State Fund for Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons and training in how to run a business. Project *WAZON* solved the problem. It was meant for people starting or running a business, who needed vocational training or other type of instruction. This programme was met with great interest.

There have always been special problems in activating disabled people living in small towns and villages. Programme *MEDIUM* was meant for such people. It offered three types of loans; one for disabled people to set up a business or concern, the second for employers in small localities who decided to start a business and employ disabled people, and for people already running a business to increase employment of disabled people. This programme was also considered successful.

In each country the situation of disabled people living in villages is more difficult - and stereotypes more entrenched. Physical strength is a value and thus a weak person is considered less valuable. In Poland it is accompanied by the decline of incomes from agricultural production, which means that for many families the pension received by a disabled person happens to be the only sure source of income. Such a situation makes the family reluctant to pursue any form of rehabilitation. Besides, people in villages are less educated, they do not feel safe outside their villages and are not very eager to go outside. They have less access to information on their rights and institutions which may offer help. A

special programme was intended to help them over these problems. In the beginning local leaders were trained to help disabled persons find contacts with social assistance and rehabilitation centres and with day care centres, as well as make contacts with employers and organisations acting for disabled persons in a given area.

How can we evaluate these measures? They are more and more refined and mastered. We began our legislation addressing measures to the unemployed as such. In due time more measures were strictly addressed to groups at risk, were better adjusted to their situation and behaviours. The example may be the change of legislation in case of school graduates. Instead of getting unemployment benefits (to which they were entitled since the first legislation in 1990) they were offered stipends, trial periods at enterprises and other activating instruments of the labour market.

The programmes proved effective when they were achieved. The unemployment rate began to drop (from 16.4% in 1994 to 10.3% in 1997) in all groups. Since 1997 however unemployment has been on the increase again. There may be various explanations to this process. The government indicated that the main reason for this was the recession in Russia coupled with high taxes which hampered entrepreneurship in Poland. The opposition cited other reasons. The first was the wrong economic policy after parliamentary elections in 1997, which caused hit the national economy. The other explanation may be the introduction of four reforms at the same time, each of them demanding support from state budget. Thus cuts in social expenses, including for active measures against unemployment. Many programmes were suspended, means for job creation have been inadequate. Another problem is that as in any country there is a proportion of those registered as unemployed who are not real job seekers. They could be

- Those preferring casual work within black economy;
- Those that rely on other members of family for financial support;
- Women with small children that have no possibility of finding a nanny assuming they could find a job (payments for pre-schools and nurseries are too high for many families, young grandmothers are still economically active and there is no tradition of baby-sitting in Poland);
- Those not able to undertake paid employment outside home.

Probably the last group should not be registered and should be taken over, in the case of poverty, by social assistance.

We may expect some changes related to labour market services in connection with administrative reform. Most of the responsibility for labour market policy was transmitted to *powiat* regional structures [16]. Though the responsibility rests in *powiats*, half of the means for active measures remained at the central level, which may deepen differences between local labour markets. The situation should be carefully monitored.

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[16] Poland is now divided into 16 voivodships, over 300 powiats and 2.5 thousand gminas

CHAPTER VI: DRAFT PROJECT PROPOSALS TO PREVENT SOCIAL EXCLUSION

1. General remarks

As discussed above it is impossible to point to one or several groups which are already socially excluded because of three causes of social exclusion: the lack of access to at least basic vocational education, the labour market and wealth. In contemporary Poland it is rather the problem of suffering several negative features, which puts people (if not groups) at the risk of social exclusion.

Following research and many discussions we came to a common conclusion that no single factor (age, gender, level of education, health condition, place of residence) puts people at risk. For example, with big regional differences in the level of unemployment, young people, even inadequately educated or women, living in big towns are not at risk of social exclusion, though everywhere their rate of unemployment and share in total unemployment is higher. The situation of disabled people, if registered as the unemployed, also depends on the locality - their situation is safer if there is a sheltered enterprise nearby, seeking for employees with special status. The unemployed can easily get an offer of training to make their skills adjusted to the demands of a potential employer.

Taking into account that Polish unemployment particularly affects the young and that location is a major factor in explaining the professional success or failure of individual people we decided that the factors which should be considered as most likely to lead to social exclusion are age and the place of residence. Special consideration should be paid to young people in agricultural areas, especially where state collective farms dominated in the past.

There is also the problem of an increasing group of long-term unemployed, often with the lowest qualifications, actually unable to profit from vocational training without a special initial basic course.

2. Groups for project proposals

It may seem easy to choose one or two groups at risk and offer them some type of instruction, training and assistance to integrate them into society. Such an approach may seem justified in the case of a group which is excluded because of only one factor or a set of strictly correlated factors of social exclusion. In case of Poland the very causes of social exclusions are correlated. For example poor people have worse access to education and thus they make a group at risk on the labour market and are over-represented among those affected by poverty. Their children will have limited access to education, thus inheriting the unfavourable situation of their parents. On the other hand age, gender, even qualifications may affect the situation of people in different ways depending on location. Even in case of minorities their situation may be more to do with their location (an underdeveloped area) than their background or, as it is with the German minority, they are better off than their

Polish neighbours. The situation is different in case of the Roma minority, which is dispersed and economically differentiated.

In spite of the above problems we shall make our proposals:

Future, advanced changes in Polish agriculture demand more engagement on the part of the government and of international bodies. The restructuring of Polish agriculture is a problem, which demands closely correlated and differentiated measures. **Young farmers, being better educated** than their parents, seem the most promising group, if they are offered assistance. They need qualifications adjusted to the local situation and an offer of a real choice of future careers. Some of them may remain in agriculture; farming is running a business, for which they need instruction. They should be taught how to make a business plan, how to plan production, what type of production to choose, depending on the demand of the local market, including the food processing industry. It means they need knowledge in the field of marketing and how to promote their production. They must learn how to apply for credits, which credits to choose and how to negotiate.

Individual farms are generally small. They lack means to invest, sometimes even for year to year production. In Poland the idea of cooperatives is not very popular. It seems important to promote the idea, to show the experience of French, Canadian, Finnish and Swedish co-operatives. In our opinion the uniting of farmers into cooperatives, setting up whole chains from production to distribution, could be one of the solutions.

Some young farmers could become active outside agriculture, either staying in villages or migrating to the nearby towns. Should they decide to set up a business they need several types of instruction:

- first of all they must learn how to choose the type of production and services; to do so they need to learn the basics of marketing; they also need practical knowledge of how to organise distribution for their production, how to cooperate with other enterprises;
- they need knowledge on how to apply for credits to run a business, how to negotiate terms with the bank;
- they also need instruction on administrative questions: how to keep books, settle payments with insurance companies, clear taxes etc;
- quite obviously some of them will need vocational training to make them better qualified in their chosen field of business;
- in case they decide to migrate, they should have access to vocational training and/or schooling for new employment.

Thus, the proposal should include four presented blocks of topics, the fourth being optional for the group without proper vocational qualifications.

The second group of proposals also refers to agricultural youth. It involves **children of people who were previously employed on state farms**. All the above proposals could be applied except that the majority of them may need vocational training to run a business whether in agriculture or outside. The majority of young people in the area discussed completed basic vocational education in farming, which instructed them for an activity that covered neither collective nor individual farming. For those with learning problems, a basic course could be advisable. Part of this group could find employment outside agriculture; in

this instance they definitely need vocational training in the specialisations demanded within local or nearby labour markets (though the Polish housing problem encourages Poles to remain in one place). It should combine both specialist theory and on-the-job training by potential employers.

School leavers, who make up a large segment of the unemployed, could be helped in many ways. Some changes in vocational education have been introduced to make qualifications more market-oriented. Yet the employers assume that vocational schools graduates generally lack practical skills. This prompts the idea of practical training for young people who cannot find a first job. It could, apart from special qualifications, include such necessary skills as driving a car, computer operating and so on.

A different type of instruction will be needed in the case of **disabled people, especially the young** (their activity ratio is extremely low). Probably a good solution would be to start with training **local leaders and personal assistants**. They should be provided with knowledge on the social security system, on labour exchange and on vocational and general education systems. They should be instructed in basic psychology and pedagogy, and be experts in social work. Their tasks should then be to help young disabled people, especially from small towns and villages, to make their way outside the home. This basic step - to organise local leaders - should be followed by courses offered to disabled people having no qualifications or having qualifications not compatible with the demands of the labour market. In cooperation with local entrepreneurs special courses could be organised for disabled people to provide employers with qualified employees. Some of the better educated disabled people could start self-employment activities. Though the Rehabilitation Fund offers credits to individuals to set up a business, they often need more finance which is why they may need all the knowledge necessary to run a business, starting from marketing, business plans and contacts with banks, to administrative matters as well as, in some cases, specialist skills. For the most educated on the one hand and the most impaired on the other, who may have problems moving from home to workplace, teleworking may be a solution. They thus need training in computer data processing, book keeping etc. They could also be specialists in tax clearance, marketing, advertising and so on.

Long-term unemployed are the group which is at risk of social exclusion (if not already excluded, at least from the labour market and wealth), who could be helped through training. The majority of them have no or very low qualifications. Even if they do have some, they are outdated. They completed education long ago; some of them may have problems with reading, writing and basic mathematics. This is why we propose to address them in two ways. One is to offer to those least educated basic instruction of a school type - to teach them how to learn again. The other step is to offer them qualifications, which are sought by the local labour markets.

On the other hand we all, as a society, need instruction in business, both to understand economic mechanisms and, for some of us, to follow the self-employment path. This is why this knowledge should be introduced into school programmes of all types of school. In order to do this we need suitably qualified teachers. Thus, another proposal, which is comparatively easy to organise and run, is to plan for summer courses for **schools' teachers**. Such courses should include basic information on free market mechanisms, labour market policy, running a business as well as how to teach entrepreneurship to school pupils and how to organise school entrepreneurship. There is one more argument: while introducing the reform of education we must cope with the reduction of schools' teachers (smaller schools

will be closed for economic reasons). Teachers with long experience, having good contacts with pupils, could find themselves in a comfortable situation teaching a new subject - entrepreneurship. Such courses should engage the best economic specialists from universities, possibly with the support from outside experts. Teachers, well instructed in teaching business, could be very valuable in promoting knowledge also among the adult unemployed. Some of them have both qualifications and knowledge, they are ready to become self-employed, yet they need instructing how to do it effectively.

3. Scope and phases of project proposals

If we consider each cause of social exclusion separately we may say that young people are the group most at risk.

From the point of view of the access to wealth the most threatened are families of non-earners, it is the unemployed, especially with family responsibilities.

From the point of view of the obtaining access to education young people living in small towns and villages, who also have low levels of personal income and who are distant from open labour markets are most affected.

Thus for our programme we could pick up a group of young people in a small town or a rural *gmina* and propose vocational training for those excluded from labour market, wealth and appropriate education. The effects may still be vague. Even if they get new qualifications they may, for many reasons, remain outside the system. There may be no offers of work because of a low level of local development, they may remain passive because of low aspirations, the lack of job-seeking skills.

We want to propose another way of thinking. No matter what cause of exclusion we discuss there is always the factor of location. Thus we should concentrate on the **region with high structural unemployment, low level of incomes and poor educational opportunities**, (for example the region of northern Poland) and think of a comprehensive programme addressed to various groups at risk, aimed at solving more general problems.

What is needed to combat social exclusion? One element is knowledge, professions, skills and qualifications. Another is general development, which may improve chances for a job, decent living and obtaining a good level of education. The third element is an offer of work and employers who are ready to offer a job to the unemployed. There were many support programmes, each of them tackling one aspect of the problem. Thus instead of proposing simple vocational programmes we propose a **comprehensive offer addressed to** a locality of **an underdeveloped *powiat***. The procedure would be divided into **phases**.

a) In cooperation with labour services we would choose a *powiat* with high unemployment, low level of incomes, without good transport connections to a bigger town, somewhere in Warminsko-Mazurski region.

b) In cooperation with local labour offices and educational institutions we would define what vocations are sought for by local employers.

c) In cooperation with the local authorities we would define what vocations may be potentially attractive from the point of view of local development plans, what spheres of production or services may be underdeveloped in the locality.

d) We would propose vocational training in defined specialities for young people registered as unemployed.

e) To increase their motivation we would offer them training in job seeking and social work to overcome passiveness.

f) We would propose a course for teachers that are redundant due to the reform of the education system. They could get instruction how to teach entrepreneurship and how to teach young people cope with the problems of the labour market.

All these plans could prove ineffective without local entrepreneurship. Thus we propose a programme for better-educated unemployed living in underdeveloped areas, to teach them how to set up and run business, in or outside agriculture. If they were to be offered support, they would solve the problem of their own unemployment and create posts for other unemployed people thus contributing to the local development.

Some elements of training would be common for all groups:

(a) basic knowledge on entrepreneurship - how to set up and run business, how to chose a branch of production and services (marketing), information on a banking system, taxes, book-keeping, including computer programmes, how to organise purchase of goods, elements of advertising etc.;

(b) basic knowledge on labour code, legal procedures, negotiations;

(c) basic knowledge on the organisation of work, managing processes.

Some elements must be different:

(a) teachers would need knowledge on the methodology of teaching entrerpreneurship, how to give instruction on job-seeking procedures, also information on the features of a local labour market; they would also need instruction on relaxation techniques, some elements of social work.

(b) unemployed young people would also need instruction on the local labour market, on job-seeking procedures, how to enter or re-enter the labour market; they may need qualification courses to acquire necessary skills.

Such a programme has one very important feature. If implemented and monitored, it could work as a pilot project and, after necessary revisions, be implemented in other places.

We propose a general framework of training against social exclusion. In the situation of Poland, the problem of social exclusion is not so much about those who are already excluded, who should now be included, but a problem of preventing social exclusion through training, possibly directed not to a group but to a locality.

As we mentioned, the situation varies geographically. This is why before introducing any programmes, they should be discussed with specialists on labour market policy, including persons responsible for local development policies. It would also be advisable to precede introducing programmes by case studies, which could inquire into the readiness of groups

involved to undertake training and become economically active. Perhaps some of the young people, who have already got used to doing nothing, would need social training, social work before they are offered the next step.

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ANNEX

According to statistical data [17] during the 1991/1992 and 1998/1999 academic schools years there were changes in the number of schools and the number of pupils and graduates.

At the beginning of the period discussed there were 112 higher (university level) schools; in the last school year their number grew to 266. There was also growth in the number of post-lyceum schools from 893 to 2,080 and secondary general schools from 1,100 to 2,003. The number of high (secondary) technical schools (except for basic vocational) grew from 3,607 to 5,225. On the other hand there was a decrease in the number of basic vocational schools from 2,995 to 2,435.

The number of university students grew from 403,000 to 1,274,000, post-lyceum students from 108,300 to 202,800, the number of general secondary schools pupils grew from 445,000 to 809,800, full secondary vocational schools from 636,600 thousand to 934,800. The only number which decreased was the number of pupils in basic vocational schools from 814,500 to 630,700.

Similar phenomena took place in the case of school graduates. The number of university graduates grew from 56,100 to 174,800. General secondary and post-lyceum graduate grew from 92,500 to 166,600, full secondary vocational from 112,900 to 178,000. In the same period the number of basic vocational schools graduates fell from 238,100 to 202,200. Young polish people are better educated, which however, does not help their situation within the labour market. The Polish unemployed are tend to be very young .

There were also changes in the education ratio. At the tertiary level it grew from 12.9% to 33.5%; at secondary level from 3.6% to 5.4%; for post-lyceum schools, from 18.9% to 30.1%; and from 26.7% to 34.4% in the case of full secondary school level. The percentage attending basic vocational schools fell from 34.5% to 23.4%. Of all basic schools (elementary) graduates, 94.3% continued education in the school year 1991/1992 and 96.6% in 1998/1999. The percentage of those who decided to continue education in general secondary schools grew from 22.8% to 35.1% and only 29% opted for basic vocational schools in the school year 1998/1999 as against 45.9% in 1991/1992. This means that more and more young people continue their education above the basic vocational level.

There were also positive changes in education of disabled children and youths. The number of these in education grew. Between the academic years 1995/1996 and 1998/1999 the number of those in basic education grew from 9,769 to 36,836. In the same period pupils in special classes within mainstream education grew from 6,613 to 7,529, in special general secondary schools from 882 to 1,255, in full vocational from 1,139 to 1,461, in post-lyceum special schools from 431 to 646. In the case of disabled pupils there was also a growth in the number of basic vocational special schools pupils from 26,895 to 28,136 during this period. This signifies that the level of education of disabled young people has improved as well.

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TABLES:

Table 1. The unemployment rate for persons aged 15 - 24 (%)

Year	Unemployment rate
1992	29.0
1993	31.6
1994	31.7
1995	30.9
1996	26.2
1997	23.2
1998	23.3

Source: Central Statistical Office

Table 2. Share of women in unemployment (% of total unemployed).

Year	Share of women in unemployment
1990	50.9
1991	52.6
1992	53.4
1993	52.2
1994	52.7
1995	55.1
1996	58.3
1997	60.4
1998	58.5
1999	57.1

Source: Central Statistical Office

Table 3. Drop in the activity coefficient of disabled persons

Year	
1988	26.1
1993	17.4
1995	16.9
1996	17.7
1997	19.0
1998	18.5

Source: Central Statistical Office

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Table 4. Shifts in education during the period of transformation.*)

year	total	university	post-lyceum	secondary vocational	secondary general	basic vocational	basic compl. uncompl
1992	100	3.6	2.6	22.4	7.4	40.5	23.5
1993	100	3.1	2.2	20.7	7.7	41.3	25.0
1994	100	2.6	2.3	20.7	7.6	44.0	22.8
1995	100	2.4	2.5	20.9	7.2	43.5	23.5
1996	100	2.6	2.4	22.0	7.0	43.0	23.0
1997	100	2.2	2.5	22.4	8.1	41.6	23.2
1998	100	3.4	2.6	20.8	7.9	41.5	23.8

Source:

■ *There is a rise in the percentage of persons with higher levels of education and the decline since 1994 in the percentage of those with basic vocational schooling. Unfortunately the percentage of those with only elementary education is still high, though a large proportion of this group, because of old age, remains outside the labour market.*

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